

# Russians probe secrets of doubling productivity of water meadows

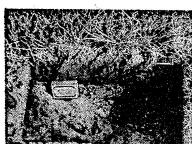
## Now do a little probing yourself!

Farming has more than its share of headaches and one of the most frustrating is low-lying river pasture. Unproductive, unprofitable, growing nothing more useful than water grass and tufts.

### What can you do about it?

J. W. Lock & Sons can answer what they had a river pasture problem—92 acres of it. Their Hougham farm—of course they run—had just this acreage of low-lying land by the river Arun. Top soil was only 2-4 inches of peaty soil lying on solid bed clay. Ploughing to bury the coarse grasses would only bring the clay on top—replacing one evil with another.

Yet today, those same fields support a sizeable, contented dairy herd. So much so, that one field which barely carried 14 heifers before, now carries 40 all through the summer.



This on top! The thinness of the top soil is clearly shown when compared with the match box. Even the shallowest ploughing would bring the clay on top.

### It all started with 5 acres

The announcement of the West Sussex River Board's Flood Abatement Scheme in 1962 started it all. Mr. Michael Lock, who manages this particular farm, decided that with the prospect of less flooding, it was time to do something positive. He turned to Mr. Eric James, the local Plant Protection representative.

Together they made a survey of the land. It was agreed that ploughing was impracticable. It was, Mr. James suggested, a perfect set-up for the 'Gramoxone' pasture renewal technique. Spraying with 'Gramoxone' would kill off all green growth—without leaving harmful residues in the soil. Then after shallow rotary cultivation the ground could be re-seeded without delay. It was decided to give the new technique a go, on one five-acre field. If it proved successful, more land would be treated in the same way.

Operations started on the 18th July 1965. Using a low volume sprayer and conventional boom, the field was sprayed with 'Gramoxone' at 6 pints in 20 gallons of water per acre.



This six-week shot. Only six weeks after spraying, the new pasture was producing enough for cattle. The 'Gramoxone' technique ensured a firm footing for the animals.



This delegation from the U.S.S.R. is one of many from overseas who have shown great interest in how Britain is increasing productivity of water meadows. The beginning, perhaps, of more and better grass on the banks of the Voga!

Two days after spraying the field looked like a desert. Dead tufts everywhere and hardly a vestige of green to be seen. It was then easy to set fire to the dead grass and get rid of the trash. On the 31st July the field was given a shallow rotavator and re-seeded two days later. Mixture used was S.22, perennial ryegrass, S.48 Timothy and wild white clover at 23 lbs. per acre.

The establishment of the new grass was good and quick. So quick that cows were grazing it within six weeks of spraying the old sward. Now in its sixth year, this pasture is still in first class condition and shows no signs of reverting to tufts.

### Two blades where one grew before

The success achieved on these experimental acres was proof enough for Mr. Lock. He set about renewing the rest of his brookland using the same technique.

Working between hay-making and harvesting, 23 acres had been treated in 1965, 12 in 1966, 14 in 1967 and so on until all the 92 acres had been treated. What had been poor grassland since the beginning of time, has been transformed into good, profitable pasture.

**Not only contented cows**

The renewal of pastures with the 'Gramoxone' technique has brought these very definite advantages: an almost kill of the old sward including tufts; the making of a consolidated footing with reduced poaching by stock. Quicker turn round from old pasture to new with less man and tractor hours. The facility of getting on with the job without having to wait for just the 'right' weather, because 'Gramoxone' remains effective even if it rains shortly after spraying.

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P.P. development officers and representatives are all technical men who are on in the field every day. They work closely with P.P. Agents—and their representatives—completing a partnership that is of benefit to all concerned with farming.



**Plant Protection**

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